

Commercial Building Energy Rating and Reporting Pilot Program Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you for volunteering to participate in the City of Boulder's Commercial Energy Rating and Reporting Pilot Program, which involves rating a whole building's energy performance with a standard rating tool. The most commonly used tool in U.S. cities today is the Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager™ software.

Your assigned energy coach will assist you in the process of rating and reporting your building's energy performance through Portfolio Manager™, which is a free, online, energy and water management tool. This process will involve acquiring data specific to your building's use type. The energy coach will walk you through the rating and reporting process, gather and input the data into Portfolio Manager™, provide you and the city with the report of your building's energy performance generated by Portfolio Manager™ and conduct a short survey with you, and any tenants involved.

Why is the city doing this pilot?

Boulder's commercial buildings account for nearly 60 percent of the community's greenhouse gas emissions. As part of the city's Climate Action Plan, a commercial energy efficiency strategy has been developed to achieve greater gains in helping businesses and buildings to become more energy efficient. Rating commercial buildings' energy performance is a significant part of the strategy and is useful for building owners to know their performance score. The city wants to help building owners and businesses to identify cost-effective energy efficiency improvements that can reduce energy use and saves money.

What are the benefits to me (the building owner) for rating my building?

You cannot manage what you don't measure. Rating the energy performance of your building establishes a starting reference point to help you understand your building's energy use and is the first step towards making informed decisions about energy-saving improvements that can reduce costs. Buildings that fall into the established Portfolio Manager™ use types will receive an ENERGY STAR rating. This rating, based on a scale of 1-100, is relative to a national survey of buildings similar to yours. Buildings that do not fit one of the pre-existing use types will receive an Energy Use Intensity (EUI) score. An EUI score represents the energy consumed by a building relative to its size and can also be used for rating and reporting.

What if my building has a low rating?

A low rating would indicate opportunity for improvement. The next step would be to evaluate the cost/benefit of measures you could take to increase your building's or businesses' energy efficiency opportunities and learn what incentives may be available through local governments and utility providers to help offset the cost of improvements. Building owners and managers recognize the value that energy efficient buildings can have on improved sale prices, lease rates and terms, as well as comfort.

How will the city use the energy rating data?

This pilot will help the city to better understand the rating and reporting process and the use of Portfolio Manager™. It will also allow the city to evaluate the commercial energy data gleaned from the pilot and identify trends from a broad sample of building sizes and uses. The city will then use this information and the outcomes of a robust stakeholder process to inform City Council on the next steps in developing a rating and reporting program for existing commercial buildings throughout Boulder.

Will the energy rating information be available to the public?

Individual building data will not be available to the public. Various sets of combined, aggregate data will be presented to City Council and will be available to the public in council agenda packets; however, no identifying information will be included in the aggregate forms.

What is the purpose of the building owner survey?

This survey will help the city better understand the time, effort and resources it takes a building owner to rate their building's energy performance by using Portfolio Manager™. The city's intent is to understand and facilitate the rating and reporting process; making it more streamlined, low-cost and useful for the building owner.